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HEROES OF OLD BRITAIN



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C. K. OGDEN

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To Uncle Tom

With love from

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HEROES OF OLD BRITAIN

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25. The Last of the Mohicans





"LOCRINE NO LONGER WISHED TO EXAMINE THE TREASURES"

Heroes of Old Britain

100 Retold from
GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH

By
DAVID W. OATES

Illustrated by STEPHEN REID



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Preface

BOYS and girls of all nations delight to read the beautiful and exciting stories of the early dawn of history. The tales of the heroes of Greece and Rome have long been familiar to British children, but the early heroes of their own race are only of late coming into their own. Indeed, there is no such superabundance of hero-stories of the British race that apology is needed for the appearance of this small collection.

The history of the far-distant past is enveloped in clouds of mystery, through which we can penetrate only by means of the legends and stories which have been handed down to us. It may be objected that these are pure romances and not true history ; but it is certain that many of these legendary stories were

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inspired by events which actually occurred, and therefore have a substratum of historic truth. If they be considered worthless as historical facts, they must not be passed over entirely, for they have influenced the thoughts, and to some extent the conduct, of succeeding ages; and for this reason alone, even if they had no interest in themselves—which is far from being the case—are worthy to be recalled and retold.

D. W. O.

To the Reader

MORE than eight hundred years ago a little Welsh lad lived in a monastery in Monmouthshire. While he was quite a child he loved to listen to the stories of the days when his ancestors were all-powerful in the land. As he grew older he collected all the old chronicles which were written on rolls of parchment, and after dreaming about the old British heroes for many years, he wrote the stories in a book which he called *The Histories of the Kings of Britain*. Geoffrey hated the Saxons as much as he loved his own race, so we are not surprised to find that he often speaks of the treachery of the Saxons which alone was able to overcome the Britons, whom he describes as being always victorious, or defeated through no fault of their

own. Shakespeare, Tennyson, and other great writers have found many of their stories in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, from which most of the chapters in this little book have been rewritten.

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“Love thou thy land with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Through future time by power of thought.”

TENNYSON.



I.—Brutus discovers the Sea-girt Isle

LONG, long ago a child was born in Italy of whom the wise men of that land prophesied many things. They declared that Brutus, for that was the name he bore, was born to great sorrow, but that, after many adventures in strange lands, he would win his way to great honour. Brutus was a descendant of Æneas, the hero who fought so valiantly in the Trojan war, and while he was quite a young child many stories were related to him about the noble Æneas and the other heroes of his race. How he loved to listen to these stories! They filled his heart with pride, and made him long for the day when he would be a man, so

that he might fight bravely, and perform noble acts as they had done.

One day Brutus accompanied his father on a hunting expedition, and when the deer were driven in front of them he chose his strongest and truest arrow, and, drawing his bow to the full, he prepared to take aim. Unfortunately, in his excitement lest the deer should escape, the lad shot hurriedly, and the arrow passed through his father's heart. When the people heard what had befallen their king they were exceedingly angry, and raised loud cries against the lad's carelessness. Some even accused him of slaying his father intentionally in order that he might be raised to the throne.

The poor lad was so terrified by the threatening manner of his kinsmen that he fled as an exile to Greece, where he joined the descendants of King Priam of Troy, who at that time were held in bondage by Pandrasus, the king. The Trojans, learning that he also was descended from those who had escaped from Troy, received him gladly.

As Brutus grew he became so renowned for his courage and prowess in battle, and his kindness to all men, that he was beloved by kings

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and dukes above all the youths of the country. His wisdom among the wise was as remarkable as his valour among warriors, and all the riches and trophies won by him he distributed to his comrades. His fame was spread abroad among the nations so that the Trojans flocked to him from all parts, beseeching him that he would be their duke, and deliver them from bondage to the Greeks. This, they declared, might easily be accomplished, seeing that they now numbered 7000 fighting men, and, moreover, they had the assistance of Assaracus, a youth of high nobility in Greece, who was born of a Trojan mother, and desired that they might be able to cast off the yoke which the persecution of the Greeks placed upon them.

Brutus, when he saw the number of the Trojan fighting men, and the strength of the castles which Assaracus offered him, granted their request, and was chosen their duke. Then, calling together the Trojans, he placed fighting men in the castles, and commanded Assaracus to retire to the forests with the remnant of the Trojans. When this had been accomplished Brutus sent a letter to King Pandrasus containing these words:—

“A nation descended from the illustrious race of Troy deigns not to be treated in thy kingdom otherwise than as the nobility of their birth demands. They have therefore retired into the depths of the forest, choosing rather to live in the manner of wild beasts, upon flesh and herbs, than to satisfy themselves with dainties and luxuries, and remain any longer under the yoke of bondage. Blame them not for their desire to recover their former dignity, but be moved to mercy, and restore to them their lost liberty, allowing them to inhabit the forest glades that they might thus be placed beyond the reach of slavery. If thou wilt not grant this, permit them at least that they may depart into other nations of the world with thy good will.”

Pandrasus was exceedingly annoyed that those he held in bondage had dared to address such a demand to him. He therefore summoned a council of his nobles, and gave orders that the army should be brought together to hunt them down. The warriors were soon prepared, and the army marched forth to search the forests in which Pandrasus supposed the Trojans to be.

Hearing of the advance of the army, Brutus

collected his fighting men in one of the castles that he might attack Pandrasus when he least expected it. As the army passed near the castle he perceived that they were unprepared for attack, many of them being without arms, and the whole body marching in disorder. He therefore charged down upon them, the Trojans striving with great courage to overwhelm them before they could recover. The Greeks, on account of their unpreparedness, were quite unable to resist this unexpected attack, and were soon scattered in all directions.

As the shattered army fled with their king at their head they reached the banks of a river that flowed near the scene of their overthrow. Many warriors were carried away by the rush of the stream, and while they struggled to gain the opposite bank, Brutus and his elated followers overtook them, and slew all whom they could reach; nor did they cease to harry them until they had slaughtered nearly the whole of them, and had taken Pandrasus captive.

Brutus was careful to bind the king, and keep him safe from the anger of his infuriated warriors, for he knew that he could obtain the object he desired more readily while the king

lived than by his death. When the light of dawn revealed the terrible slaughter that had been inflicted upon the enemy, he commanded that the dead should be buried, allowing his comrades to do as they pleased with the spoils of the slain.

He then collected his troops, and marched to the forest. His people rejoiced greatly when they received tidings of his great victory, and when he had gathered together the chief of the people he inquired of them what they should demand of Pandrasus now that he was in their power. Some proposed one thing, and some another. While they still talked and hesitated, one of the chiefs arose and, calling for silence, he began to speak.

“It is my opinion that we should demand of Pandrasus his eldest daughter as a wife for our duke, together with her possessions of gold and silver. That he should provide us with ships and provisions in order that we may go our way to seek out other lands. If we desire that we and our children might have lasting peace, we must depart from this land, for so long as they remember the slaying of their kinsfolk they will hold us always in eternal hatred, and, taking

Brutus discovers the Sea-girt Isle 19

offence at the merest trifles, will do their best to wreak vengeance upon us."

When he had finished speaking the whole of the assembly signified their assent with shouts of approval, demanding that Pandrasus should be straightway brought before them that they might hear what reply he would make to their petition. Brutus therefore delayed not to bring their captive forth. When he was set before them their demands were made known to him, and, fearing that a cruel death would befall him if he refused their petition, he readily promised to fulfil their desires, offering himself as a hostage until he had accomplished all the things he had pledged himself to do.

Over three hundred ships were gathered from all the shores of Greece, and when they were loaded with provisions of all sorts, Pandrasus brought forth his daughter Ignoge to be wedded to the Trojan duke. Valuable presents of gold and silver were given to the victors, and the captive king, having fulfilled all his promises, was set free, and the Trojans departed to their ships. Ignoge shed bitter tears that she was forced to forsake her kinsfolk and her country, and could not withdraw her eyes from the shore

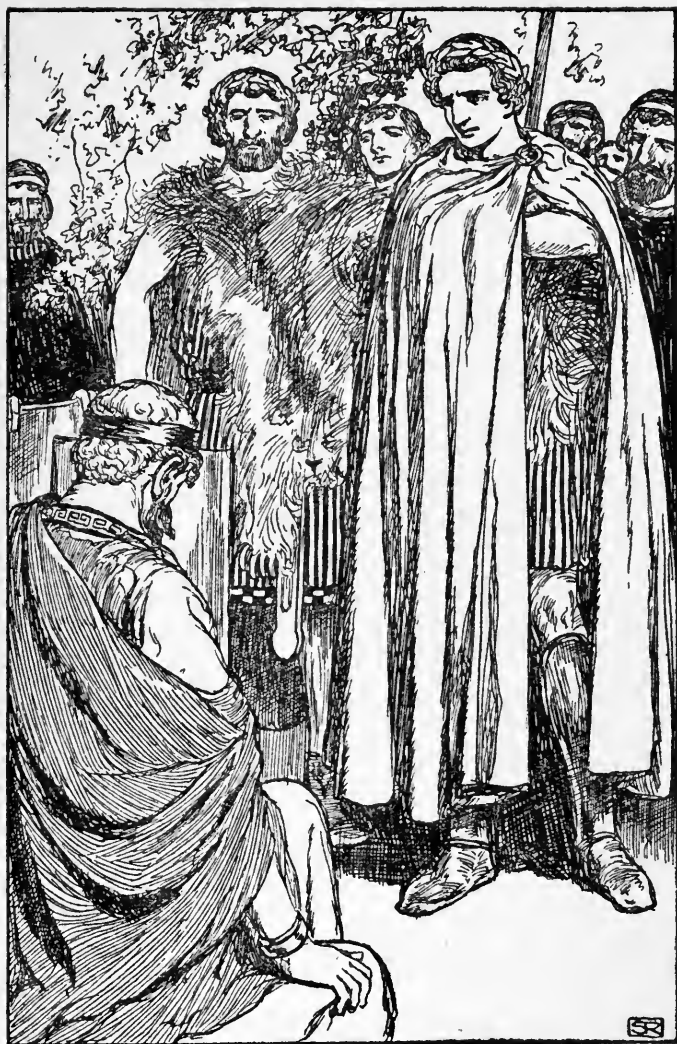
as long as it remained in sight. Brutus sought to soothe her sorrow with gentle words, and, folding her in a tender embrace, he did not cease to comfort her until, weary with weeping, she fell asleep.

They sailed the seas for two days, and on the second day the wind bore them to the shores of a certain island which had been uninhabited since it was laid waste by the pirates. They wandered over the island until at length they discovered the ruins of a city. Here there was an ancient temple containing an image of the goddess Diana which possessed power to answer the questions of those who sought its aid with proper forms and ceremonies. When they had adorned their brows with garlands they set up three altars, as was their custom, and offered their sacrifices before the temple. Brutus himself, holding in his right hand a vessel of sacrificial wine, raised his face toward the image, and called aloud :

“ Goddess of shades, and huntress, who at will

Walk'st on the rolling sphere, and through the deep,
On thy third reign, the earth, now look and tell

What land, what sea of rest thou bidd'st me seek.”



"THEIR DEMANDS WERE MADE KNOWN TO HIM"

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After he had repeated this nine times he poured forth the wine upon the altar, and, vowing that he would erect temples to the goddess Diana in this new home if answer were given him, he cast himself down before the altar and fell into a deep and sweet sleep. As he slept he beheld the vision of a goddess who drew near to him, and said :

“ Far to the West, in the ocean wide,
Beyond the realm of Gaul a land there lies—
Sea-girt it lies—where giants dwelt of old.
Now void, it fits thy people ; thither bend
Thy course ; there shalt thou find a lasting home.”

When he awoke he doubted whether it had been a dream, or whether it were the goddess herself who had thus foretold the land to which they should go. At last he called his companions, and told them all that had befallen him in his sleep.

They were filled with great joy, and desired that they should return to their ships as quickly as possible, and set full sail for the West in search of that land which the goddess had promised. They proceeded westward through the Mediterranean Sea before a favourable wind until they reached the Pillars of Hercules. This

was the name by which Gibraltar and the rock on the opposite shore were known in those days, because the ancients believed that Hercules had set them there as a monument to mark the extreme limits of his western wanderings.

The fleet passed through the strait, and was then driven before the current northward along the shores of the country we now call Spain. At length, after enduring much suffering, and encountering great dangers from the perpetual surges of the Atlantic on account of the frailty of their vessels, they were cast upon the shores of a strange land.

The Trojans were exceedingly glad to escape from the discomforts of the voyage, and set out with joyful hearts to explore the land. They were all filled with delight at the rich drapery of fruitfulness and verdure which clothed the land. There were broad undulating plains, green mountains, and romantic glens, and all was so fertile and beautiful that Brutus and his comrades desired that they should dwell in the land. They knew that this was the island which it had been prophesied should be theirs, and they therefore gave it the name of their duke. It had before borne the name of

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Albion, but from that day it was known as the land of Brutus. The name has been changed a little during the hundreds of years that have passed, but even to-day the name Britain recalls Brutus the brave duke of the Trojans.

II.—The Last of the Giants

WHEN the Trojans had all landed from their ships, Brutus called them together upon the seashore, and offered a thanksgiving to the gods for having brought them safely through all the dangers of the sea voyage. Then, raising their hands to the sky, they called for a blessing upon their new home, that they might become a nation as great and noble as the ancient race of Troy.

They then set out to explore the island. They pressed onward over the grassy plains for many days, and it seemed to them that the land was uninhabited, for they had seen no man since they had landed. The farther they went into the heart of the country the more delighted were they with all they beheld. The rich verdure of the land, the choice fruits and flowers that grew in the fertile soil of the plains, the abundance of fish in the rivers, and the deer

and many other kinds of animals that roamed in the forests filled Brutus and his companions with a great desire to remain there.

One day, as they were exploring the island, they drew nearer the mountainous districts, and in the depth of a vast forest they discovered some strange-looking monsters. They looked like huge men, but their bodies were covered with long hair, and they wore no clothing. When the giants saw the Trojans advancing toward them they stood gazing upon them, and Brutus ordered his men to take their bows and shoot their arrows into the air. The strange creatures had never seen men armed with bows and arrows, and the sound of the flight of arrows whistling through the air over their heads so terrified them that they fled to the mountains uttering savage cries of rage.

When Brutus had driven the giants to take refuge in the caves of the mountains he divided the country among his companions by lot. Then they began to till the ground, and to build houses, so that in a short time the country began to look as though men had dwelt there a long time. At last Brutus called the island Britain, and his companions Britons, after his own

name, for he was anxious that his name should be kept in memory.

All the Trojans had some portion of land. Corineus, the bravest warrior of the whole company, had the largest portion, and when the choice was offered him he asked that he might have the wild, rugged portion of the island that jutted out into the sea. He chose this rocky portion rather than the fertile plains, because there was a greater number of giants there than in any of the provinces that had been shared amongst his comrades, and nothing pleased him more than to do battle against the giants. He gave his land the name of "Cornu" because, he said, it was the "horn" of Britain; but, as the years went by, this name was changed to Cornwall.

One day when the Trojans were assembled together on the seashore, where they had first landed, to hold a high festival to the gods, the giants led by their chief fell upon them. They had seen no trace of the giants for many weeks, and had therefore concluded that they would remain in the mountain caves. Now they were unarmed, and quite unprepared for an attack, and the giants slew many of their number in

the first onslaught. Brutus and Corineus encouraged the panic-stricken Britons who fled hither and thither to seek shelter from the cruel blows which the giants rained upon them. At last, collecting together from all quarters, and seizing such weapons as lay around them, the Britons prevailed against the giants, and slew them all save Goemagot only.

Goemagot was the most hateful of them all; he stood twelve cubits in height, and possessed such great strength that, when he had uprooted it, he would wield an oak-tree as lightly as though it were a wand of hazel. Brutus commanded that Goemagot should be kept alive, for he was anxious to see a wrestling match between him and Corineus, who was desirous above everything else of matching himself against such a monster.

It was arranged that the contest should take place without delay, and everything was made ready for the encounter. Corineus was exceedingly joyful at the thought of the combat, for he knew no fear. Then, girding himself for the struggle, he flung away his arms, and challenged the giant to wrestle with him. For some time they stood face to face, hugging each other with all the strength of their mighty arms,

both making the place resound with their breathless panting. It was not long before Goemagot, rushing suddenly upon Corineus, seized him with all his force, and broke three of his ribs.

All the onlookers were silent, for they thought it was impossible that Corineus could recover from this serious injury. Then Corineus, realizing that he would be for ever disgraced if he allowed the giant to triumph over him, was filled with fury, and, putting forth all his strength for a last great effort, he cast himself upon the hairy monster. For a moment the giant stumbled under the force of the mighty onslaught, and Corineus, perceiving his opportunity, seized the monster in his terrible grip, and bearing him upon his shoulders, ran as fast as he could under the great weight to the seashore. Mounting to the top of a high cliff near at hand, and disengaging himself from the grip of his opponent, he hurled the deadly monster into the sea, where, falling upon the sharp rocks, his flesh was mangled, and his blood dyed the waters of the sea.

After that time, in memory of the great triumph of Corineus, the place was called Lamgoemagot, which means "The leap of Goemagot."

III.—The Overthrow of King Humber

WHEN King Brutus died he was buried within the city he had built, and the land of Britain was divided between his three sons. Locrine, the eldest son, had the middle part of the island, which was called Loegria after his name; Camber had that part which is now called Wales but which was then called Cambria; Albanact, the youngest son, had the northern portion of the island, giving it the name of Albany after himself.

The three brothers ruled the land in peace for many years, and the country was more prosperous than it had been even in the days of their famous father. Their prosperity continued without anything to disturb their happiness until Humber, King of the Huns, a pirate chief who sailed the mighty seas in search of adventure and plunder, heard of the beautiful kingdoms over which these three brothers ruled so happily. The wonderful accounts of the

wealth and prosperity of Britain filled his heart with covetous desire, and made him eager to raid its fruitful shores. He speedily collected his band of fierce followers, and landing in the rocky creeks with which the seashore of Albania abounded, he overthrew Albanact and compelled the country folk to flee in terror to Locrine.

Now that the land was in his possession Humber took up his residence in King Albanact's palace, where he and his followers devoted their days to sport, and their nights to feasting and revelry in the hall. So happy were they in their new life that none of them desired to return to their vessels, but all were content to dwell in the homesteads which had been deserted by the terrified country folk.

Locrine, when he heard the sad end that had befallen Albanact, besought his brother Camber to accompany him, and calling out all the fighting men of the country, he went forth to meet the King of the Huns. Slowly the great army marched forward toward the place where Humber and his rough followers were living a life of pleasure and plenty. Humber, hearing that a mighty army was advancing against him, became exceedingly angry, and his

followers fearing to face a mighty force sworn to avenge the death of the king they had slain, begged that they might return to their ships with the booty they had taken, and put to sea before Locrine could overtake them. Humber, made reckless by the bountiful good fortune which had attended his landing, would not hear of the possibility of defeat, but maddened with rage he swore with a terrible oath that he would do to these two kings who marched against him what he had so easily done to poor King Albanact. Then, he declared, he would rule the whole of this beautiful island, and end his days here in peaceful happiness. He therefore banded his warriors together, with promises of a still happier day than they had yet known, when the whole of the island should be theirs.

Headed by the sea-robber king, this curious army set out southward to meet the British forces. At last they reached the banks of a great river, and on the other bank discovered the army they had set out to seek unable to cross until rafts were constructed. Humber had commanded his men to bring their boats down the sea-coast to give assistance to the army if it were necessary. And now, filled with

a great hope by the advantage over the enemy which the possession of boats gave him, he immediately sent for them, thinking to carry his army across the river and take the enemy by surprise.

With as little delay as possible his army crossed the river and bore down upon the British while they were engaged in constructing their rafts. All hope of success against them soon vanished from his heart, however, when he found how fearlessly the British warriors could fight when their hearts were filled with a desire to avenge the cruel slaughter that had been dealt out to their kinsmen.

Slowly but surely Humber's army was driven back toward the river, and the pirate king, perceiving the hopelessness of his cause, endeavoured to reach one of the boats and thus make his escape. Rushing into the water he was rapidly borne away by the current and disappeared in the depths of the river before the British warriors who were pursuing could overtake him. The river has borne his name to our own day in token of his defeat and death.

When the Huns saw that their leader was slain, all courage forsook them, and they cast

themselves down before the victorious Britons, pleading that they might be allowed to bring forth all the plunder which they had in their ships and then return to the mighty sea once more.

Locrine commanded that all the treasures should be brought forth from the ships of the sea-robbers. The British host shouted for joy when they beheld the immense wealth of gold and silver, precious stones, wondrously wrought armour, costly garments, and war trappings which the sea-robbers had seized during their many raids. Locrine and Camber went forth to the vessel in order that they might see more clearly the extent of the treasure. As the royal victors advanced they beheld three young maidens confined in an apartment in the vessel. One was so fair that scarce any might be found to compare with her for beauty, for no polished ivory, nor newly fallen snow, nor fairest of lilies could surpass the whiteness of her flesh.

Locrine no longer wished to examine the treasures, and he earnestly besought Camber that he would take all the treasures only that he might have this fair maiden for his wife. Advancing toward the maiden, whom he now

desired above all else in the world, he stood unable to utter a word to her as she rested upon the support of her two guards with her face cast down to the ground in fear and shame. At last he struggled to speak, and, in a voice that trembled with emotion, he bade her have no fear, and sought that she would tell him who she was and how she came to be placed with the guard.

As the kind tones of his voice reached her ears she ventured to raise her beautiful face to meet his gaze, and then, hearing that Humber was slain, she cast herself down before Locrine, declaring herself his slave and glad to be set free from Humber whom she dreaded. With hands that touched her as tenderly as the gentle breezes caress the flowers, he raised her from the ground and stood gazing upon her fair form, entranced by her marvellous beauty.

He then induced her by means of kind and gentle words to tell him her story.

“In my homeland far across the sea,” she began nervously, “men called me Estrildis the fair, and there I lived a happy life in the palace of my father the king, until the terrible Humber came with his fierce host and slew my father

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and destroyed his palace. I was little more than a child, and he carried me away captive. How earnestly I have longed that death might take me from this unhappy place. Now my heart is filled with joy that thou hast slain the cruel Humber, and I am happy to be thy slave, for I know that thou art a good and gentle king."

Locrine comforted her with tender words, for his manly heart was filled with pity and love.

"Have no fear, fair maiden," he said; "while I live no harm shall befall you."

The king commanded his warriors to take Estrildis to the palace and there attend her with all the honour due to one of her rank. He then sought his brother and pleaded with him that he would take the ships, the plunder, and all else, so that he might have Estrildis for his wife.

King Camber laughed heartily at the passionate words of his brother, reminding him that it would be madness to set aside Gwendolen, the daughter of the powerful Corineus who had slain the terrible giants against whom their father waged such fierce war.

These words made Locrine sad at heart. He was betrothed to Gwendolen it was true, but

not because he loved her. Corineus, who ruled over the kingdom of Cornwall, had no son, and Locrine was to marry Gwendolen so that Cornwall might be added to Loegria when Corineus died. Now he could think of nothing but the beautiful Estrildis. He walked forth from his brother to ponder over these new feelings which had come into his heart. The value of the kingdom of Cornwall, and the friendship and good wishes of Corineus seemed as nothing beside his love for Estrildis. His mind was filled with new and noble thoughts, and his heart swelled with a new pity and love which had made him happier than he had ever deemed possible. Surely the gift of a pure and perfect love was far greater than all the kingdoms of the earth. He resolved to take the only course which would bring him happiness, and returned to his brother determined to do as he had sworn. Estrildis should be his bride.

Preparations were therefore set on foot for the celebration of the bridal. News soon reached Corineus of what Locrine was minded to do, and he was angry beyond measure. He brandished his mighty battle-axe and swore an awful oath to be revenged for this insult. His

companions trembled with fear when they saw his terrible anger, and sought to appease him with their loud protestations of disgust, promising to march forth against Locrine, and forthwith compel him to cast this mad design from his mind.

The fighting men of Cornwall were soon made ready, and they set out to seek the offending king. When they reached Locrine's palace, Corineus stepped toward the king, brandishing his battle-axe threateningly in his right hand, and shouting in tones of great anger:

"Are these the wages, Locrine, that you would pay me for all the wounds I have received in your father's service when he was warring against the giants—that you disdain my daughter, and stoop to wed a barbarian stranger? If this indeed be so, you do it at the peril of my vengeance so long as any strength is left in this right hand which has robbed of life so many giants."

Shouting this threat again, he brandished his battle-axe as if about to strike Locrine. So threatening did he appear in his anger, that the men who stood around threw themselves before him and prevented the blow.

Locrine's heart was filled with darkest gloom,

for he saw that he must either submit or suffer death. His nobles and chief men urged him to set aside his plans and take Gwendolen as his wife, for their warriors feared to take up arms against the mighty Cornish host. With a heavy heart Lochrine agreed to carry out their demand, and, having somewhat appeased the anger of Corineus, they compelled their king to marry Gwendolen as he had pledged himself to do.

IV.—The Fate of Estrildis and Sabrina

NO man in Loegria was as unhappy as the king. His great grief because he was forced away from the fair Estrildis was pitiful to behold. Nothing his nobles and friends could do or say was able to bring the smallest trace of joy into his life. The queen was hard and cruel like her father, and all the time he thought of the gentleness and beauty of Estrildis.

Gwendolen was not fair of form, and her face had none of the remarkable beauty and delicate refinement that had made Estrildis so dear to him. The whole time he lived in the palace his heart was with the maiden he loved, away in her lonely banishment.

When he had been forced to wed Gwendolen, he devised a plan whereby he might keep Estrildis in safety from the jealous devices of Gwendolen, and at the same time find occasional hours of happiness in stealing away to linger a

while in her presence. He sent Estrildis away secretly into the depths of the forest, where she was entrusted to the care of a faithful old shepherd, and then caused it to be announced that she was dead. The people mourned for her, and Locrine wore the garments of mourning, and was as full of sorrow as one who has lost a dearly loved friend.

Locrine was fearful lest Gwendolen should discover his secret and bring harm upon Estrildis. He therefore planned a secret underground dwelling in the woods, and unfolded his purpose to a few of his faithful friends to whom he could entrust his precious secret. The underground dwelling was accordingly constructed, and Estrildis was removed from the shepherd's hut under cover of the darkness of night. He next sought an excuse which would enable him to visit her without betraying his secret to the queen. In a short time he began to take a great interest in religion, and begged that he might be alone to ponder over its mysteries. He would wander in the fields and woods for hours together, uttering the while various religious incantations. The people who beheld him were filled with pity, declaring to one

another that the loss of Estrildis had preyed upon his mind, causing him to wander abroad and behave in this unusual way. Everyone soon grew accustomed to his peculiar habits, and he was allowed to wander to the woods without arousing the slightest suspicion.

He was happy once more, now that he could be in the presence of the maiden he loved. In secret he married her and made her his queen, determining to place her on the throne as soon as the death of Corineus would enable him to cast forth Gwendolen from his palace.

His misery would vanish when he wandered through the woods to Estrildis. For seven long years she dwelt in this strange underground chamber, and all this time Locrine dared not declare her his wife, because of his dread of Corineus. During these weary years a daughter was given them to bring more joy into their sad hearts. The little Sabrina, for that was the name they had given her, was even fairer to look upon than her beautiful mother, and Locrine loved her with as great a love as he did his wife. Whenever Locrine stole away from the palace, Estrildis forgot the sorrow that weighed upon her so heavily because she was forced to keep

so fair a child in such a dark and miserable dwelling. And as the unhappy king held his noble wife and their beautiful child in his arms, their faces beamed with a radiant happiness, and their hearts were filled with a great joy.

At length news was brought to Loegria that Corineus had been seized with a fatal sickness, and the kingdom of Cornwall had passed into the hands of Lochrine. When the king received the news, his whole being seemed suddenly changed. His people rejoiced to see him happy once more, as he had been in the days before he was compelled to wed Gwendolen. He then unfolded his secret to them, and made known to all his subjects that Estrildis was not dead, as they believed, but that she was his queen whom he would immediately place upon the throne.

The people received the news with every indication of joy, for they had felt exceedingly sorry for their unhappy king as soon as they had been able to forget the terrible wrath of Corineus. Indeed, all rejoiced at the return of Estrildis except the proud and haughty Gwendolen, who did not conceal her jealous hatred of Estrildis and the little Sabrina. She had been a hard and cruel woman while she sat

upon the throne, but now she became even more fierce, ready to use any device in order to get those she hated into her power. Everything else was set aside to further her one evil desire to be revenged upon the queen who had usurped her throne. The beauty and loveliness of Estrildis and Sabrina only gave additional force to her fierce purpose.

Lochrine and Estrildis passed their days in such perfect happiness that the seven long years of her banishment were quite forgotten, and they lived only for each other and their perfect love. The beautiful Sabrina grew more beautiful each day, and all men spoke of her as the fair princess. Stories of her great beauty spread even to Cornwall, whither Gwendolen had returned.

The Cornish warriors were too much concerned over the selection of a ruler to succeed Corineus to pay much attention to the lament of Gwendolen. But she could not endure delay in seeking revenge. Maddened by the same revengeful fury as her father had felt, she called the men of Cornwall together and implored them by the love they bore her brave father to aid her to overthrow King Lochrine who had

driven her from the throne. The Cornish army set forth with Gwendolen at its head, and began to harass King Locrine by sending bands of raiders into his land.

This brought the heavy gloom over Locrine's heart once more, and fearing to leave Estrildis and their child in the palace while he went forth to do battle against Gwendolen, he took them with him, and brought his army out toward the south.

The two armies met near the banks of a river, and early in the encounter Locrine was struck down by an arrow, and gave up his life. It was a woeful day for the men of Loegria, and as the day wore on the repeated attacks of the fierce Cornish warriors, urged on by the cries of their infuriated leader, began to tell upon the tottering ranks of the army of the fallen king. Now that they had no leader to hold them together, all resistance seemed vain, and while the sun was still high in the heavens their overthrow was complete.

Gwendolen commanded that Estrildis and her child should be brought before her, and rejoiced exceedingly at the thought that they were now in her power. When they were

brought forth, no feeling of pity for their heavy sorrow moved her; instead she hurled bitter taunts and cruel gibes at the helpless couple. Little Sabrina sobbed aloud in her terror, but even this could not touch the stony-hearted Gwendolen, and she continued to pour out the wrath of her dreadful vengeance upon the defenceless captive queen and her innocent child.

Estrildis stood immovable, holding her child to her. She heeded not the words that were shouted at her; her thoughts were with the king lying dead upon the field of battle, and she longed only for death as an end of her sorrow. Calmly she awaited the doom that was to be passed upon them. Not a muscle of her beautiful face showed any trace of fear as the cruel words reached her.

“Take them away, and hurl them into the bosom of the noble stream that flows yonder, and from this day it shall take the name of that unfortunate child as a token to all men of the infamy of her father.”

A number of the rough warriors rushed forward to seize the unhappy pair. Estrildis drew herself up bravely, and raised her voice in tones of appeal:

“Oh! terrible queen, in whose power we are, I pray thee let not these cruel hands be laid upon this innocent child. Death has no terrors for us, we will walk gladly whithersoever it pleases you to command.”

At last some feeling of pity was stirred in the cruel heart of Gwendolen, and waving aside the warriors she commanded Estrildis and the little princess to advance to the river's edge, and cast themselves into its waters.

Still holding the hand of her beautiful child, Estrildis strode slowly down the grassy mead, and with tender words of love she dried the tears from the beautiful young eyes. The calm dignity of the brave queen and the rare beauty of the child touched the hearts of the rough Cornish warriors, who stood silent as they passed among them.

For a moment they stood at the water's edge, gazing upon the rushing, swirling eddies of the stream. Neither spoke a word as they sank upon their knees and lifted their sad, beautiful faces toward the ruddy glow of the setting sun. Slowly the captive queen raised her child, and they stood for a moment in one last fond embrace. Then, turning their faces



"ESTRILDIS STOOD IMMOVABLE"



toward the stream, hand in hand they stepped fearlessly into its waters. The sad sight brought tears to the eyes of many of the hardened old warriors who stood around. Some of them longed to rush forward and save them from their doom, only they feared the terrible anger of Gwendolen. The next moment nothing could be seen but the widening circle upon the surface of the waters, and the warriors returned sad and silent to their tents. Gwendolen alone stood there, gazing silently upon the waters. She had satisfied her revengeful desire, but yet she could not rejoice. Her heart was still full of bitterness, and she could not attain even a portion of the happiness she sought.

All the people of Loegria mourned that sad day, and as the years passed they would gaze upon the waters which had swallowed their beloved princess, believing that though she had perished her spirit still dwelt there. And men have called the river Sabren or Severn after her name even to this day.

V.—King Lud delivers Britain from the Plagues

WHEN King Brutus had divided the country among his people he wished to build a chief city where he might dwell. He searched throughout the land for a place where he could build his city. At last he came to the river Thames, and walking along its banks he discovered a spot well suited to his purpose. He therefore built his city here, and called it New Troy.

After many years King Lud came to the throne, and he rebuilt the walls of New Troy, and erected many towers to guard the walls. Then he commanded the citizens to build such houses within the city that none in the kingdom should equal them for magnificence. Though he had many castles and cities, King Lud loved this one more than any other, and he dwelt here during the greater part of the year. The people therefore began to call it Lud's

King Lud delivers Britain from Plagues 53

town in place of New Troy, and it became known throughout the land as Ludston. We still call it London from the king who loved to dwell there. Before he died King Lud commanded that his body should be buried near one of the gates of the city, which was afterwards known as Lud's Gate, and gave the name Ludgate to a district in modern London.

While King Lud ruled the land three plagues fell upon the Island of Britain, such as none had ever known before. The first was the coming of a certain race called the Coranians, whose knowledge was so great that nothing could be said, however softly it might be spoken, without their hearing it. Their coin was fairy money which, when received, appeared to be good coin, but afterwards turned into pieces of fungus. Yet they could not be injured, because they heard even the softest whisper of any plot against them. The second plague was a shriek which came on every May-eve, over every hearth in the Island of Britain. This went through the people's hearts, and so scared them that they were paralysed with fear, and many lost their senses. The third plague was, that however much food might be prepared in the King's

palace, none of that which was unconsumed remained after the first night.

King Lud felt great sorrow and care, because he knew not how he might free the land from these plagues. And he called to him all the nobles of his kingdom, and asked them what he should do against these afflictions. By common consent the nobles advised that he should seek the counsel of his brother Llevelys, King of France, a man of great wisdom.

They prepared a fleet, and when all was ready Lud and those whom he chose to go with him went into their ships and sailed for France. Tidings of the approach of the ships having been brought to Llevelys, he came forth to meet his brother, and when they were come together each put his arms about the other's neck, and they welcomed each other with brotherly love.

After Lud had told his brother the cause of his errand, Llevelys said that he already knew the cause that brought him to France. They talked earnestly together of the plagues which had caused King Lud such sorrow, and Llevelys told his brother that he would give him some insects, some of which he should keep to breed lest by chance the affliction might come a second

King Lud delivers Britain from Plagues 55

time. And the remainder of these insects he should take and bruise in water. Then, when he came home to his kingdom, he should call together all the people, both of his own race and of the race of the Coranians, for a conference, as though with the intent of making peace between them; and that, when they were all together, he should take this charmed water and cast it over all alike. And he assured him that it would poison the race of the Coranians, but that it would not slay or harm those of his own race.

“And the second plague,” said he, “that is in your kingdom, behold it is a dragon. Another dragon of a foreign race is fighting with it, and striving to overcome it, and therefore does your dragon make a fearful outcry. When you return home, cause the island to be measured, and in the exact central point dig a pit, and in it place a cauldron full of the best mead that can be made, covering it with a sheet of satin. Then remain there watching, and you will see the dragons fighting in the form of terrific animals. And at length they will take the form of dragons in the air, and, after wearying themselves with fierce and furious fighting,

they will fall in the form of two pigs upon the covering of satin, and they will draw it down to the very bottom of the cauldron. They will drink the whole of the mead, and after that they will sleep. Then immediately fold the covering around them, and bury them in the earth in the strongest place you have in your dominions. As long as they remain buried there, no plague will come upon the Island of Britain from elsewhere.

“The cause of the third plague,” said he, “is a mighty man of magic, who, through illusions and charms, causes everyone to sleep, and then takes your meat, your drink, and your store. You must yourself watch the food and provisions. And, lest he should overcome you with sleep, have a cauldron of cold water by your side, and when you are oppressed with sleep plunge into the cauldron.”

Then King Lud returned to his land. And immediately he summoned to him the whole of his race and of the Coranians. And as Llevelys had taught him, he bruised the insects in water, and cast it over them all, and it destroyed the whole tribe of the Coranians, without causing harm to any of the Britons.

King Lud delivers Britain from Plagues 57

Some time after this Lud caused the island to be measured, and, finding the central point near Oxford, he caused a pit to be dug there into which he lowered a cauldron of the best mead that could be made, with a covering of satin over it. He himself watched that night, and while he was there, he beheld the dragons fighting. And when they were weary they fell, and came down upon the top of the satin, and drew it with them to the bottom of the cauldron. And when they had drunk the mead they slept, and in their sleep Lud folded the covering around them, and buried them in the securest place he had in the mountains of Eryri. And thus the fierce outcry ceased in his kingdom.

King Lud next caused a great banquet to be prepared, and when it was ready, he placed a vessel of cold water by his side, and he himself watched over the provisions. He remained thus fully armed, and lo! in the middle of the night he heard sweet sounds of music and various songs, and drowsiness urged him to sleep. Upon this, lest he should be hindered from his purpose and be overcome by sleep, he went often into the water. And at last, behold, a man of vast size, clad in strong, heavy armour,

came in, bearing a hamper. And, as was his custom, he put all the food and provisions of meat and drink into the hamper, and proceeded to go forth with it. King Lud was exceedingly amazed that the hamper should hold so much.

As he was marching out of the banquet hall the king hastened after him, crying aloud :

“Stop, stop ; though you have caused us many insults, and seized much spoil in the past, you shall not do so any more, unless your skill in arms and your prowess be greater than mine.”

Then the man instantly put down the hamper on the floor and awaited the king. The encounter was so fierce that sparks of fire flew out from their swords. At last King Lud grappled with him, and fate bestowed the victory on the king. And after he had overcome him by strength and might, the strange man besought his mercy.

“How can I grant you mercy,” said the king, “after all the many injuries and wrongs that you have done me ?”

“All the losses that I have ever caused you,” said he, “I will make repayment for, equal to what I have taken. And I will never again do what I have done, but your faithful vassal will I be.”



"THE KING HASTENED AFTER HIM, CRYING ALOUD"



King Lud delivers Britain from Plagues 61

The king accepted this promise from him, and he became one of the king's vassals.

Thus did King Lud free the Island of Britain from the Three Plagues. And to the end of his life he ruled the Island of Britain in prosperous peace.

VI.—Caractacus, Prince of Gwent

IN the year A.D. 43 the tribes of the Cymry were filled with terror when they heard that the Roman hosts were advancing against them. They realized that they must at once proceed to elect a war-king to lead their forces against the invaders. The choice of the Britons was a wise one, for who could lead their army with greater hope of success than the brave Caradog? This dauntless leader, whose name the Romans afterwards changed to Caractacus, son of an old chieftain well known in battle, was Prince of the Silures and ruled his people wisely from his court at Caerleon.

The heroic Caractacus was held in such high esteem by his countrymen that the men of Britain, from the prince to the slave, became his followers in their country's need against the progress of the foe, and wheresoever he went in war, all men of the island went in his train, and none desired to remain at home.

The army which he collected, though not as well drilled as the Roman army, possessed such valour that their approach often made the Romans tremble. "Their war chariots were cleverly made; each carried a charioteer for driving, and one or two warriors for fighting. The horses attached to them were perfectly trained, and so well in hand that they could be driven at full speed over the roughest country and through thick woods." The dread of these spirited little horses often brought discomfiture upon the Roman warriors, and the sharp scythes that stood out from the chariot wheels broke their ranks. Then the sturdy British warriors leaped from their chariots and fought on foot. "In this manner," writes Julius Cæsar, the Roman, in his "Commentaries," "they perform the part of cavalry and infantry, and by constant use they have arrived at such expertness that they can stop their horses when going at full speed in the most steep and difficult places, and turn them which way they please."

For nine long years this brave leader and his gallant followers struggled heroically against the enemy, now with success, now with defeat, rising from each severe conflict to fight for

freedom with renewed vigour. Throughout the struggle their courage never wavered, and they were equally unmoved by the tempting promises or the terrible threats of the enemy.

At length Plautius, the Roman general, was recalled to Rome, and Ostorius Scapula was sent to carry on the warfare with strengthened forces. Under the new general the Romans pushed their way through the land of the Silures, and Caractacus, as he retreated toward North Wales, saw that the enemy intended to vanquish them. Refusing all offers of peace which the Romans made, declaring that it meant slavery, Caractacus determined to decide the fate of his beloved Siluria by a final battle.

The line of his retreat may still be traced through Hereford, Brecknock, and Radnor. Cradoc station, three miles from Brecon, is named after him ; and Battle Church, on a neighbouring hill, marks the scene of one of his fiercest battles.

In order to obtain a strong position for the great and eventful battle, Caractacus marched to the rugged hills of Shropshire, and there pitched his camp for the final stand. The Roman historian, who gives ungrudging praise to the

warrior-prince of Gwent, has written a description of the site chosen by him: "He posted himself on a spot to which the approaches were as advantageous to his own troops as they were perplexing to us. He then threw up, on the more accessible parts of the highest hills, a rampart of stones, below and in front of which was a river difficult to ford. Picked men showed themselves before the ramparts."

While preparations for the great battle were proceeding, the gallant warrior-prince walked among the ranks of his courageous companions, encouraging them with kind words, and inspiring them with renewed courage for the fierce conflict which was to decide whether slavery or freedom was to be their fate. At length the preparations were completed, and the Roman army drew nearer to their stronghold.

On the eve of battle Caractacus gathered his men together, and, with all the eloquence which his noble language gave him, he appealed to his brave-hearted warriors in words whose fierce fervour stirred their natural heroism to the depths. He spoke to them of the disgrace, humiliation, and dishonour of defeat, and the slavery, tyranny, and oppression which it would

bring upon them, beside which the rapture of victory, and the joys of continued freedom appeared all the greater. He then reminded them that the great and powerful Romans were not unconquerable, recalling how the brave and mighty Cæsar had been repelled by the valour of the British warriors, which, could it be rekindled, would sweep the Romans into the sea and leave the peace-loving Britons in joyful possession of their beloved sea-girt island home.

When the last echoes of his burning words died away into the peaceful silence, which foretold the coming storm of battle, a great cry rent the air, as from the hearts of all the British warriors poured forth the grand and solemn promise "never to yield to weapons or to wounds."

The whole scene was bathed in the golden rays of a glorious sunrise as the well-trained Roman legions began their attack upon the British stronghold. The Roman leaders stood disheartened before the formidable barriers, and for the first time in their warfare in these islands needed the encouragement of the fighting men in the ranks to urge them on to the

attack. The Roman warriors hurled themselves against the ramparts of the British stronghold, only to be swept back like the waves of the storm-tossed sea that, in their fury, beat upon the rocks in vain, and, breaking, fall again into the calmer waters below.

“So all day long the noise of battle rolled,” and all the while the British hero moved along the ranks, crying :

“The era of liberty or eternal bondage begins this hour! Remember your brave ancestors who drove the great Cæsar himself from these shores, and preserved their freedom and their property, and kept their wives and children from slavery and dishonour.”

For a while fortune favoured the gallant hosts of Caractacus, who time after time repulsed the Roman legions with terrible slaughter. But as the fiery disk of the setting sun sank beyond the western hills, hope faded from the hearts of the brave warriors, and they began to taste the bitterness of defeat. As the darkness gathered the British hosts, courageous still, began to waver, and the silver moon arose upon a scene of direst desolation. The Romans were in possession of the British camp, and held the

wife and family and all the relations of the defeated chief as prisoners of war.

Caractacus effected his escape, and fled to seek the assistance of his stepmother Cartis-mandua, queen of a neighbouring tribe, still hopeful of driving back the hateful invaders. She received her kinsman with kindness, but before many days had passed she began to consider how she might betray him to the enemy in the hope of gaining more generous treatment from them. Thus Gwent's heroic chieftain and resolute warrior was treacherously given into the hands of the Roman conquerors, who loaded him with chains, and made hasty preparations for taking him to Rome, together with his wife and family, to appear as captives before the emperor.

The news of the capture of their most obstinate enemy filled the Romans with joy, and the day of his coming to Rome in the chains of a captive was declared a general holiday for rich and poor alike. The streets of the Roman capital were thronged with people eager to see the stubborn enemy who had resolutely defied the Roman arms for nine years. As the princely captive was led in triumph before the emperor,

in spite of his fettered hands and broken battle-axe, he seemed more heroic than ever. Of all the captives brought before Claudius, Caractacus alone showed no fear. His face bore no signs of sorrow, though his brave heart must have been filled with grief at the thought of his beloved homeland ; there he stood erect amongst the slaves who cast themselves prostrate before the imperial throne, fearless and calm, dignified even in defeat. Marching boldly before Claudius seated on his throne, he claimed the liberty to speak, and, moved by his manly bearing, the emperor, with uplifted hand, called for silence that he might be heard. A deep stillness fell upon the assembled crowd as, with fearless glance upon all around, the gallant Briton began to speak.

“Think not, mighty Claudius, lord of Rome, and ruler of the world, that I would address thee as a slave ; I speak as the bold should greet the brave. If to the nobility of my birth and the splendour of exalted station I had united the spirit which would deign to hold a vassal’s throne, Rome had beheld me not in captivity, but a royal visitor and friend. I might have ridden through Rome’s crowded

streets to-day not borne down with the base fetters of a captive, but as an honoured vassal of the mighty throne. Worthless to Rome, with all her palaces and wealth, must be the homely huts and woodland bowers of the sea-girt isle, but they were dear to us, for they were free. I had arms, and men, and horses; can you wonder that I was unwilling to lose them? I was born free, with a heart and soul unfettered and unquelled; do you marvel that I scorned to hold the throne by your consent? I am now in your power; if you are bent on vengeance, fulfil your purpose; it matters not to me since I can no longer hold the free throne of Britain; the bloody scene will soon be over and I shall be forgotten. But on my fate depends your glory, or your shame. Preserve my life and I shall be to the end of time a monument of Roman clemency."

When he ceased, a murmur of applause arose from the astonished and admiring Romans. The Empress Agrippina was so moved by the dignified courage and manly bearing of the British captive that she urged the emperor to spare his life. Her request was granted, and he was allowed to wander through the streets of



“I AM NOW IN YOUR POWER”



Rome, but was always chained by the arm to a soldier of the Imperial Guard.

St Paul was a prisoner in Rome at this time, and listened with great interest to the stories of the Druids related by the British captive prince. After many fruitless efforts Caractacus induced the Roman authorities to accept hostages for his promise not to join the British army if given his freedom, and he was allowed to return to his beloved Siluria. Finally, on the death of the Emperor Nero, all the British captives were allowed to return to their native land, where the remainder of their lives was spent in peace.

VII.—Vortigern and the Saxons

WHILE King Constans ruled the Britons Vortigern conspired against him, and by means of treachery brought about his death. Then, when he saw that there was no one amongst the Britons strong enough to oppose him, he seized the crown. Yet, although he was King of the Britons, he was exceedingly unhappy. The Picts were constantly attacking him, and two of the princes who had fled from the country in fear of him were building a great fleet in order to return and take the kingdom which was theirs by right. While he was devising a means of withstanding these attacks, his messengers hastened to him with the news that several boats had landed in Kent, full of armed warriors big of stature. He commanded that the strangers should be treated with courtesy, and brought before him without delay.

In a short time they appeared before him,

and he began to examine them closely, demanding whence they came, and the reason why they had thus come into his kingdom. Then Hengist, their leader, standing boldly forth, made answer :

“Most noble of all the kings, the Saxon land is our birthplace. We have come to these shores to offer you our services, for we have been banished from our country. Therefore, in accordance with the custom of our land, we put to sea, and, Mercury directing our course, we have reached thy kingdom.”

The king started at the name of Mercury, demanding angrily what gods they worshipped.

“We worship the gods of our fathers,” replied Hengist. “First of all our gods is Mercury, whom in our tongue we call Woden. To him have our forefathers given the fourth day of the week. After him we worship Frea, the goddess that is most powerful above all other goddesses.”

“Your faith in heathen gods grieves me very much,” exclaimed the king. “Nevertheless, I rejoice at your coming, for God must have guided you hither to help me in my hour of need. My enemies oppress me on every side,

and if you will share with me the toil of battle, I will reward you with great riches."

The Saxons agreed to these terms at once, and were therefore received gladly into the king's court.

The Picts at length marched down upon the kingdom with a large force, and Vortigern, calling his men together, advanced across the Humber to meet them. The conflict was a fierce one, but so gallantly did the barbarian Saxon forces fight that the Picts were soon put to flight.

Vortigern, pleased that he had won so great a victory by their help, increased his bounty the Saxons toward them, and gave Hengist, their leader, the Isle of Thanet as a reward for their services. Then the crafty Hengist, finding that the king held him in such friendship, begged that he might send for more warriors from his Saxon home in order to make the country more secure against the attacks of the enemies who threatened it on all sides. Vortigern, thinking that kindness alone prompted such a thought, accepted the offer gladly, and promised to give Hengist whatsoever he would ask in return.

When the vessels laden with chosen warriors

arrived, Hengist invited the king to the palace he had built for himself to dwell in, that he might see the new warriors. After the king had partaken of the banquet which had been prepared, a fair maiden, bearing a golden cup filled with wine, advanced before him, and, bowing low, she said :

“Laverd King, wacht heil !”

The king, amazed at her beauty, heeded not the words until his interpreter said to him : “She hath called thee Lord King, and hath greeted thee by wishing thee health.” Then Vortigern remembering the Saxon custom, replied, “Drinc heil !” and bade the maiden drink. He then received the cup from the maiden’s hands, and, kissing her, drank of its contents.

The king’s heart was filled with such delight at the fairness of the maiden that he desired to take her for his wife. He therefore demanded her name, and asked that her father might be brought before him. At these words Hengist stepped before the king, and informed him that the maiden was his daughter Rowena. Then the crafty Hengist, knowing the king’s desire, took counsel with Horsa and the chief of the Saxons as to the payment he should demand for

Rowena. They were all of one mind,—that the maiden should be given to the king, and that they should ask of him the province of Kent in return for her. That same night, therefore, Rowena became the king's wife, and the province of Kent was given to Hengist.

“Now that I am thy father,” said Hengist to the king a short time afterward, “it is fitting that I be thy counsellor. Hearken therefore to my counsel, and let us, I pray thee, send for more of my kinsmen, and thus shalt thou subdue all thine enemies.”

The king consented, and allowed him to send for whatever help he could obtain. Thus more and more Saxons were invited to the shores, until the Britons, fearing the treachery of the barbarians, besought the king that he would drive them from his realm. It was not right, they said, that these heathen people should be allowed to settle among them: already such numbers had arrived that they were a terror to the country folk, for they had so thrust themselves into their midst that no one could tell with certainty which were heathens and which Christians, and many were even married to Christian women.



"THAT SAME NIGHT ROWENA BECAME THE KING'S WIFE"

Vortigern was very displeased at their words, for he loved the Saxons above all other nations because of Rowena his wife. When the Britons saw that he would not heed their counsel, but continued to deal bountifully toward the Saxons, they rose against him and, driving him from the throne, chose Vortimer, his son, to be their king.

Vortimer shared their fear of the barbarian Saxons, and, acting upon the advice of his people, he commenced to drive them out of the kingdom. He overthrew them in four pitched battles, and when they could no longer withstand the attack of the Britons, they sent Vortigern, who had been with them in all their battles, to petition Vortimer for leave to depart in their ships. Without waiting for a reply to their request, however, they embarked in their ships, and returned to their native land.

Vortimer at once restored the possessions which the Saxons had seized to their rightful owners, and repaired the churches which had been neglected by Vortigern. The Britons held their king in great esteem, for he treated them with affection and courtesy, and they were happier than they had been since the Saxons

first came amongst them. Their joy, however, was short-lived, for the treacherous Rowena plotted against the king's life. By means of many bribes she had brought one of the king's attendants into her power, and giving him a poisonous draught, she bade him place it in the king's wine-cup.

No sooner had the noble king swallowed the contents of his cup than violent pains seized him, and he knew that his life drew near to its end. Calling his faithful warriors around him he spoke words of farewell, and distributed amongst them all his treasures of gold and silver. Then, exhorting them to fight for their country, to defend it against all enemies, he passed from life mourned by all the Britons.

Now that their beloved king was dead the people thought once more of Vortigern, and they restored him to the throne, believing that he would rule the land more wisely now that the Saxons had departed. Rowena then entreated Vortigern earnestly that Hengist might be called back to Britain. Vortigern feared that the Britons would be enraged if all the Saxons they had driven from the country sought to return; he therefore sent his messengers secretly to

Hengist, bidding him return with a few men only.

Hengist had already been informed of the death of Vortimer, and fitting out a fleet he sailed for Britain with an army of Saxon warriors. When news of the arrival of such a mighty host was brought to Vortigern and his princes, they at once resolved to carry arms against them, and drive them from their coasts. Hengist was informed of their resolve by means of a messenger from Rowena, and he immediately thought out a plan which would enable him to overthrow the British army by treachery.

He accordingly sent messengers to the king, declaring that he had returned accompanied by a band of warriors neither with any intention of remaining in the country nor with the desire to do violence to any that dwelt in the island. He had brought an army, he declared, because he believed that Vortimer was still alive, and in case Vortimer had resisted his coming, he came prepared to withstand him. Now that he had no longer any doubt that Vortimer was indeed dead, he committed himself and his people unto Vortigern to dispose of as he should think best.

Vortigern was pleased with these messages, as he did not desire that Hengist should again depart from Britain. He therefore arranged that the Britons and the Saxons should meet to discuss the matter, so that there and then it might be solemnly settled.

Hengist, for the fulfilment of his treacherous design, arranged that every Saxon should conceal a long knife in his clothing, and when the unsuspecting Britons were discussing the questions of the proposed peace, he himself would give the signal, upon which each of them should cast himself upon the Briton standing next to him, and, drawing his knife, slay him as swiftly as possible.

On the day appointed for the conference the two peoples were met together to discuss the terms of the peace. When the discussion was at its height, Hengist perceived that the opportunity for his treacherous act had arrived, and laying hands upon Vortigern and holding him fast, he shouted :

“Nimath eowre Seaxas” (seize your long knives).

At these words the Saxons drew forth their long knives, and fell upon the defenceless

Britons, slaying over four hundred of their chief nobles. They spared Vortigern's life, demanding his cities and his wealth as a ransom. The sorrowful king readily consented, and he was then set free from his fetters.

VIII.—Merlín and the Dragons

AFTER the treachery of the Battle of the Long Knives, King Vortigern called together those of his wise men who had escaped from the slaughter, and bade them tell him what he should do.

They said to him : “Retire to a remote corner of your kingdom, and there build a strong tower to defend yourself, for the Saxon people you have received are treacherous, and will again seek to subdue you by guile.”

The king, pleased with this advice, sought in all manner of places to find a spot suitable for such a purpose. They travelled throughout the kingdom, and came at length to a province called Gwynedd, where they discovered a spot on one of the mountains of Eryri suitable for the erection of the citadel. Then said the wise men : “Build the tower here, for in this place it will be secure against the Saxon barbarians.”

Then the king commanded the stone masons and carpenters to collect all the necessary materials for the building. When all the materials were collected from all parts in readiness for the building, they disappeared mysteriously in the night, so that in the morning nothing remained of all that had been provided. Materials were provided a second time, but by morning no trace of them remained. Everything was brought together for building a third time, but they vanished as mysteriously and completely as on the two previous occasions.

Vortigern was very disturbed in his mind by this mystery, and called together his wise men that they might tell him the cause of this strange thing.

“You must first find a lad born without a father,” they said; “and when he is found, slay him, and sprinkle his blood upon the ground on which the tower is to stand: by this means alone will you accomplish your purpose.”

This advice, which seems so strangely cruel to us, did not cause the king any surprise, for there had been a custom in olden times of slaying a person in order that his blood might

be used as cement for the building. The ancients believed that this sacrifice would make the foundations of the building sure, and give strength to the building. The king therefore thought the advice which his wise men had given him was good, and immediately sent messengers into all the provinces of Britain to search for a child born without a father.

When they had searched everywhere in vain, they came to Bassalleg, and being weary with their travelling they sat down at the gate of a field in which some lads were playing at ball. While they sat watching the game, two of the lads began to quarrel, and one of them said to the other : “ What a fool thou must be to think thou art a match for me. Keep thy distance, O boy without a father, no good will ever happen to thee.”

At these words the messengers lifted up their faces, and gazing at the lad to whom these words had been spoken, inquired of the bystanders who the lad might be. They told them his name was Merlin, no one knew his father, but his mother was of noble blood, and lived with the nuns in the city. The messengers concluded that this must be the lad for whom

they were searching, and led him away to the king.

The king rejoiced that his messengers had succeeded in their search, and having examined the lad and his mother by means of many questions, the following day he gathered together his counsellors, his warriors, and his workmen to witness the ceremony which the wise men had ordained.

When the lad was brought before the king he asked : " Why have your messengers brought me hither ? "

" My wise men," answered the king, " have advised me that you must be put to death, and that the ground on which my tower is to be built must be sprinkled with your blood. Unless I do this I shall be unable to build it."

" Command the wise men here," replied the lad, " and I will prove that they have devised a lie to you."

The king, amazed at the boy's words, commanded the wise men to stand forth. When they appeared before him, Merlin began to question them.

" How was it made known to you that my

blood must be sprinkled upon the ground before the citadel can be built? Speak, and tell us straightforwardly who discovered me to you?"

The wise men made no answer to his questions, and then turning to the king he said: "I will shortly explain everything to you, but first I wish to question your wise men."

Then turning again to the wise men he continued, "Know ye not what it is that hinders the foundation of the tower being laid? You have given counsel that the mortar thereof should be moistened with my blood, so that the tower should stand firm. Now tell us what is it that lies hidden beneath the foundation, for there is something that will not allow it to be built?"

But the wise men were filled with fear and held their peace in acknowledgment of their ignorance. Thereupon the lad continued:

"My lord the king, call thy workmen and bid them dig the soil, and you will find a pool beneath it that prevents the building of the tower."

And when this had been done, a pool was



“SPEAK, AND TELL US STRAIGHTFORWARDLY WHO DISCOVERED
ME TO YOU”

found under the earth, even as the lad had said.

“Now,” he continued, turning to the wise men again, “tell us what is underneath the pool.” But they were dumb and held down their heads in shame.

“I can explain it to you if your wise men cannot,” he said, addressing the king. “Command, O king, that the pool be drained, and in the bottom of it you will find two stone vessels, and in the vessels are two dragons asleep.”

The king, believing his words, commanded that the pool should be drained. And when they found the two stone vessels even as Merlin had said, he marvelled greatly, and all those who stood around were no less astonished that such wisdom had been found in the lad. While Vortigern, the king, remained seated upon the bank of the pool, the two dragons came forth, the one white and the other red.

“Watch carefully,” cried the lad, “what the dragons do.”

When they had drawn near together they began to struggle with each other in baleful combat, and breathed forth fire as they panted.

Presently the white dragon obtained the mastery and drove the red dragon to the margin of the pool. But he, refusing to be driven out by his enemy, fell upon him fiercely, and forced him to draw back into the pool. Three times this was repeated, until at length the red dragon, which was apparently the weaker of the two, recovered his strength and, pursuing the white dragon, drove him forth until he disappeared.

Before the king and his people could recover from their amazement, Merlin called for the wise men, bidding them explain the meaning of this omen. Once again they had to acknowledge their ignorance, and the king looked to Merlin that he might declare what this battle of the dragons did portend.

“The meaning of this mystery is clear,” began the lad. “The pool is the emblem of this country, and the two dragons are the two races of people who contend for its possession. The red dragon signifies the race of Britain, which shall be oppressed for a long time by the white dragon, which signifies the Saxons whom you have invited hither, and who now occupy several provinces and districts in Britain. In

the end, however, the Britons will arise and drive forth the Saxon race beyond the sea, whence they have come, even as the red dragon drove forth the white from the pool."

IX.—The Dance of Giants

AURELIUS, the king, having triumphed over Hengist and all his Saxon enemies, called the earls and princes of the realm together, and commanded them to restore the churches which the Saxon people had destroyed. He then rebuilt the cities that had been laid waste, and set the government of the country in order, renewing the laws, and restoring to his people the possessions which their grandsires had lost. At length he came to the monastery of Kaer-caradoc, that is now called Salisbury, where the earls and princes whom Hengist had betrayed in the Battle of the Long Knives lay buried. When he gazed upon the spot where his brave kinsmen lay, the tears began to roll down his cheeks, and he considered how he might erect a lasting monument here, for he thought the green turf that covered so many noble warriors who had died for their country was worthy of mark.

He therefore called together the most skilful craftsmen in stone and wood, and commanded them to erect a building that should stand for ever in memory of men so worthy. They all declared that the task was beyond their power, and the Archbishop of Caerleon, hearing their speech, came to the king and said :

“If there is any man able to carry out this difficult work, it is Merlin, Vortigern’s prophet. I know there is no abler man in the kingdom, whether it be in foretelling the future, or in devising wondrous things. Send and bring him hither, and I’ll warrant that he will be able to build a memorial that will last.”

When Aurelius had asked many questions about him, he sent messengers to seek for him, and having found him they brought him to the king. The king received him kindly, and being anxious to hear marvellous things, he bade him foretell the future.

“Such things I cannot speak except in case of sore need,” replied Merlin. “If I were to reveal these mysteries for the sake of amusement, the spirit that informs me would be dumb, and would forsake me in the hour of need.”

The king said nothing more about the future,

but explained to him the scheme which he had in his mind, and the purpose for which Merlin had been brought before him.

“If you are anxious to mark the burial-place of these men with a work that will endure for ever,” began Merlin, “send for the Dance of Giants that is in Killaraus, a mountain in Ireland. This structure no one could remove, for the stones are big, and if they be set up in a circle around this spot, here shall they remain for ever.”

At these words the king burst out laughing. “How may these mighty stones be brought from a far country, and, besides, have we not stones in Britain suitable for the work?”

“Laugh not so lightly, O king,” replied Merlin, “for these mysterious stones possess a healing power against many ailments. They were carried from the farthest end of Africa, and set up in Ireland by the giants of old, in order that they might be cured of any malady.”

When the Britons heard these things, they began to think that it would be well to send for the stones, and they chose Uther Pendragon, the king's brother, to lead a band of soldiers into Ireland to obtain the stones. They also

sent Merlin with him to act as his counsellor in the difficult undertaking, and as soon as the ships were ready, they set sail for Ireland.

At that time Gilloman, a youth of marvellous prowess, was king in Ireland, and when he heard that the Britons had landed in Ireland, he collected his army and set out to meet them. Having learned the reason of their coming, he laughed heartily, and said to those who stood near him :

“No wonder the Saxons were able to lay waste the island of Britain, when the Britons are such foolish people. Who has ever heard of such folly? Are the stones of Ireland any better than those of Britain that our kingdom should thus be challenged to fight for them? Arm yourselves, men, and defend your country, for never while life is in me shall they carry off from us the smallest stone of the Dance.”

Uther, seeing that the Irish were ready to fight, attacked them immediately and, overcoming them, compelled Gilloman to flee for his life. They then pressed onward to Mount Killaraus, and when they reached the structure of stones they marvelled greatly at the scene

before them. While they were all standing around, Merlin came to them and said :

“Now, my men, see if you can bring down these stones for me. Then we shall know whether strength or skill will prevail.”

The men set to work with all manner of devices in order to bring down the stones of the Dance. Some rigged up huge hawsers, some worked with ropes, some with scaling ladders, all were eager to accomplish the work, yet all their efforts did not succeed in moving one of the stones.

When they were all weary with their labour, Merlin burst out laughing, and began to carry out his own plan. At last, when everything that he needed was set in its place, the stones were removed so easily that the men could hardly believe what they saw. When they had laid down the stones they carried them to the ships, and placing them securely on board, they set sail, and returned to Britain.

After the stones had been carried to the burial-place, Aurelius, the king, sent messengers throughout Britain, summoning the clergy and the people to witness, with rejoicing and honour, the erection of the stones as a lasting monu-

ment over the burial-place of their brave kinsmen.

In obedience to the king's command, representatives of all his subjects met together on the day appointed. And when all were met together they celebrated the Whitsuntide festival with great magnificence, giving up the three following days to holiday. And when everything was in readiness, the king commanded Merlin to set up the stones he had brought from Ireland around the burial-place. Merlin therefore obeyed his command, and set up the stones in a circle around the burial-ground just as they had stood upon Mount Killaraus in Ireland. Thus the mysterious stones of Stonehenge proved yet once again how skill surpasses strength.

X.—Arthur, the British Hero King

THE Saxons, who had proved so treacherous to Vortigern, continued to plunder and devastate the country. They wanted the whole island for themselves, and sent many times to their native shores for more warriors. The Britons were in a very troubled state, because the Saxons continually harassed them. "We know not which way to turn," they cried. "The barbarians drive us to the sea, the sea forces us back to the barbarians, between which we have only the choice of two deaths—either to be swallowed up by the waves, or butchered by the sword."

After the death of Uther, the king, the barons of Britain came together and proposed to Dubricius, Archbishop of the City of Legions, that he should crown Arthur, Uther's son, as king. For they were in sore need of a noble leader, because the Saxons, hearing of Uther's death, had invited more of their fellow-country-

men from Germany, and under Colgrin, their leader, were bent upon exterminating the whole British race. Dubricius therefore, sorrowing over the calamities of the country, called the bishops together, and crowned Arthur king of the Britons at Caerleon upon Usk about the year 500.

It is very difficult to separate the Arthur of history from the legends and wonderful stories that have grown up around his name. So great is the amount of romance with which the story of his struggle against the Saxons has been overlaid that an air of fable has been cast over his actual exploits, making it almost impossible to discern the historical truth. Some people have even doubted whether "any such person reigned in Britain," but all sons of Britain are satisfied that, besides that which is fabulous, there is truth enough to entitle him to fame.

Arthur was a youth of fifteen years when the crown was placed upon his head. His courage and generosity were beyond compare, and such was his inborn goodness and grace that all men loved him. So great a multitude of knights flocked to his service that he found it difficult

to obtain sufficient wealth to make fitting presents to them.

His first duty was to advance against the Saxons. Therefore, calling upon Maelgwyn, king of North Wales, and Meiric, king of South Wales, to help him, he assembled the warriors under his command and marched toward York. When Colgrin heard of this, he got together the Saxons, Scots, and Picts, and came with a mighty army to meet him. So fierce was the onslaught that the greater part of both armies perished in the battle; nevertheless, Arthur won the day, and pursuing Colgrin to York, besieged him within that city. Baldulf, Colgrin's brother, hearing of the overthrow of the Saxons, marched with 6000 men toward the besieged city; but Arthur, choosing a position on the road whereby the enemy were bound to march, surprised them by a sudden attack, and, cutting up their ranks and slaying many of them without mercy, drove them off in flight.

Colgrin at last contrived to send messengers to Germany for assistance, and they returned bringing with them six hundred ships full of stout warriors under Duke Cheldric. When Arthur's counsellors heard of their coming, they

advised him to besiege the city no longer, for it would be hopeless, in their present condition, to do battle with so great a multitude of enemies as had now arrived.

Arthur therefore accepted the counsel of his barons, and retired to the city of London. Thither he summoned all the clergy and chief men of the kingdom, to ask their advice as to what it were best for him to do against this inroad of the pagans. At last, by common consent of them all, messengers were sent to King Hoel in Armorica with news of the calamitous state of Britain. Hoel, who was the son of Arthur's sister, commanded his men to prepare the fleet, and, mustering 15,000 men-at-arms, set sail for Southampton, where Arthur received him with all due honour.

A few days later they set forth to relieve the city of Lincoln, which was besieged by the pagans. There they did battle with the Saxons and routed them with terrible slaughter. Six thousand of them perished in the battle, some were drowned in the river, others smitten by the Britons. The rest forsook the siege and fled in dismay, but Arthur pursued them until they reached the forest of Caledon, where the

barbarians rallied and did their best to make a stand against him.

They defended themselves bravely, avoiding the arrows of the Britons in the shelter afforded by the trees. When Arthur perceived this he commanded his men to fell the trees in that part of the forest, and to set the trunks around the Saxons in such a way that they could not escape, being determined to besiege them there until they should die of famine.

When three days had passed the Saxons, having no food and famishing to death, begged for leave to go forth, promising to leave all their gold and silver behind them so that they might return to Germany with nothing but their empty ships. They promised further to send him tribute from Germany and to leave hostages for its payment. Arthur agreed to their petition, retaining all their treasure and the hostages for the payment of the tribute, and granting them only the bare permission to depart. When they were sailing the sea homeward they repented of their covenant, and, tacking about, they returned to Britain, and landed at Totnes. Without delay they laid waste the land as far as the Severn, slaying all the husbandmen who with-

stood them. Then they marched onward and besieged the city of Bath.

When word of this was brought to the king, he was astonished beyond measure, and commanded that judgment should be done upon the hostages because of the treachery of their companions. Abandoning an expedition against the Picts and Scots, for which he was then making preparation, he hurried to the relief of the city. When he drew near to Bath and beheld the Saxons, he drew up his warriors and began to address them :

“Because these hateful Saxons have disdained to keep faith with me, I, faithful to my God, will endeavour to avenge upon them the blood of my countrymen. To arms, therefore, ye warriors—to arms, and fall upon yonder traitors like men, for, of a certainty, with Christ’s help, we cannot fail of victory !”

Then placing upon his head his golden helmet, which bore the figure of a dragon graven upon it, he prepared for the battle. On his shoulders he placed the shield named Priwen, upon which was painted the image of the Holy Mary. At his side hung Caliburn, best of swords, and in his right hand he bore the lance that was called

Ron, a tall, stout lance, meet to do slaughter. Assembling his forces, he boldly assaulted the Saxons, who stood their ground manfully all day long.

At nightfall neither army had obtained any advantage, and the Saxons, discovering some high ground, encamped upon Mount Badon. When the return of daylight revealed their position to Arthur he attacked them bravely, but in the ascent of the hill he lost many of his men, for the Saxons, dashing down from the height, had the advantage.

To dislodge them from their strong position seemed impossible, but, putting forth all their strength, the Britons at last gained the summit of the hill, and closed with the enemy, who strove with all their strength to stand their ground.

Long and fierce was the fight. And when the day was far spent, Arthur, angry at the stubbornness of their resistance, drew forth his sword Caliburn, and, crying aloud the name of the Holy Mary, rushed into the thickest part of the enemy's ranks. Whomsoever he touched he slew at a single blow, nor did he once slacken his onslaught until he had slain, single-handed, a large number of the enemy.



“ HE PLACED UPON HIS HEAD HIS GOLDEN HELMET ”

When the Britons beheld this, they followed their leader in close rank, dealing slaughter on all sides, so that Colgrin, and Baldulf, his brother, and many thousands beside fell before them. As soon as Cheldric saw the hopeless position of his men, he took to flight, and the Britons pursued the enemy, slaying all they overtook without mercy. At last, finding all shelter failing, Cheldric marched his shattered companies to the Isle of Thanet. Here the Duke of Cornwall, following hard upon their heels, smote down the Saxons, nor did he stay the slaughter until Cheldric had been slain. So decisive was the victory that he compelled them to give hostages for the surrender of all the Saxons in the island, and thus the advance of the Saxons was checked for many years.

King Arthur gained in all twelve victories over the Saxons, and having established peace with them, he triumphed over all his enemies, and added to his government Ireland, Iceland, Gothland, and the Orkneys, subduing in all thirty kingdoms, including Norway, Aquitaine, and Gaul.¹ In order to demonstrate his joy

¹ When we consider how hard the Saxon army pressed upon him, for the ninth battle is said to have taken place at

after such triumphant success, Arthur, upon the approach of Pentecost, resolved to hold a magnificent court to place the crown upon his head, and to invite the kings and dukes under his subjection to the solemnity.

Caerleon, his chief city, it is difficult to accept these wonderful stories of foreign conquest related by Geoffrey as accurate records.

XI.—The Coronation of King Arthur

WHEN the festival of Whitsuntide drew near, no place more suitable than the City of Legions, now called Caerleon, could be found for the celebration of the ceremony which Arthur had resolved to hold. For, besides its great wealth above all other cities, its situation on the river Usk, near the Severn Sea, was most pleasant, and fit for so great a solemnity. On the one side it was washed by the noble river, so that the kings and princes coming from oversea could sail up to it in their ships; and on the other side, the beauty of meadows and groves, and the magnificence of the royal palaces, with their lofty, gilded roofs, rivalled even the grandeur of Rome. Ambassadors were then sent to the various kingdoms to invite to the court all their kings and princes, and no prince of any consideration desired to remain at home, for Arthur's bounty was famed throughout the whole wide world.

When at last all were assembled in the city on the day of the great festival, the archbishops were conducted into the palace to place the crown upon the king's head. Dubricius, therefore, because the court was held in his diocese, made ready to celebrate the service. As soon as the king was invested in his royal robes, he was conducted with great pomp to the church, supported on each side by two archbishops, the kings of Scotland, Cornwall, North and South Wales, bearing before him, as was their right, four golden swords.

In another part, the queen, wearing her richest apparel and ornaments, was led by archbishops and bishops to the Church of Virgins. The four queens of the four kings who attended Arthur bore before her four white doves, according to ancient custom, and after her there followed a retinue of ladies rejoicing greatly. When the procession was ended, so beautiful was the music of the organs, and so many were the hymns that were chanted in both churches, that the knights who were there scarcely knew which church they should enter first because of the exceeding sweetness of the harmony in both.

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When divine service was over in both churches, the king and queen put off their crowns, and, putting on their lighter robes and ornaments, went to the banquet that had been prepared, he to one palace with the men, and she to another with the women ; for the Britons still observed the ancient custom of Troy, according to which men and women used to celebrate their festivals apart.

When all were set at table according to their rank, Kay, the seneschal, in rich robes of ermine, with a thousand young noblemen all in like manner clothed in ermine, served the dishes. Then Bedivere, the butler, followed by the same number of attendants clothed in furs, carried round the wine vessels and poured forth the wine into the drinking-cups. In the queen's palace innumerable pages, dressed with many ornaments, performed various duties ; but if we were to describe all the details of the magnificent banquet, this little book would not be long enough to contain them all. For at that time Britain had reached such a high pitch of grandeur that, in abundance of riches, in luxury of adornment, and in the courtesy of its inhabitants, it far surpassed all other kingdoms.

The knights, who were famed for feats of chivalry, wore their clothes and arms all of the same colour and fashion. And the ladies also, no less celebrated for their wit, wore all the same kind of apparel, and esteemed none worthy of their love till he had proved his valour thrice in battle.

As soon as the banquet was over, they withdrew to the fields outside the city, to join in sports and various games. The knights engaged in a game in imitation of a fight on horseback, and the ladies, looking down upon them from the tops of the walls, encouraged them so that they might see better sport.

“The gilded parapets were crowned
With faces, and the great tower filled with eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.”

Others spent the rest of the day in various games, such as shooting with bows and arrows, tossing the pike, casting heavy stones and rocks, playing at dice and similar amusements, and each was happy in his chosen way. There was no sound of strife or quarrelling whoever gained success, and when the sports were ended

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the victors were rewarded with rich prizes by Arthur.

After the first three days had been spent in this manner, on the fourth day all who, in virtue of the office they held, had rendered any service at the festival were called together to receive a fitting reward for their services. Some were appointed to the government of cities and castles, others were made archbishops or bishops, and many received other posts of honour.

When Arthur had allotted all the rewards given in honour of his great festival, twelve old and dignified men came to his palace at Caerleon, and after saluting him, they presented a letter to him from Lucius, the emperor of Rome. When Arthur had read the letter he called his earls together in the Giant's Tower, and made known to them that the Emperor of Rome sent demanding tribute from them on account of Julius Cæsar's conquest.

"Comrades," said he, "alike in adversity and in prosperity, whose prowess I have made proof of, in giving counsel no less than in deeds of arms, consider earnestly what it is best for us to do in the face of such a demand."

When they had considered the matter for a

long time, and many of the knights had spoken, Arthur arose in their midst.

Since Lucius has presumed," he began, "without cause or reason, to demand that which is unjust, let us demand tribute from him, and let him that is the better man of the two carry off that which he now demands."

Then Hoel, rising in precedence of all the rest, made answer for them all :

"Since the Romans desire to take from us that which is our own, beyond doubt we ought to take what is theirs from them, if only we might meet them in the field. This is a battle most desired by all the Britons."

Soon after this, Arthur, having made ample preparation, went abroad with his army to seek terms of peace for his kingdom, leaving Modred, his nephew, as regent of the kingdom and protector of his wife, Guinevere. While Arthur was leading his army against the Romans, Modred traitorously betrayed the trust that had been placed upon him. Forming an alliance with the Saxons, he set the crown of the kingdom upon his own head, and made Guinevere his queen.

As soon as news of the treachery of Modred

reached the king, he gave up his expedition against the Romans, and hastened back to Britain. Modred meanwhile obtained the aid of Saxons from Germany, pledging himself to give them large tracts of land in reward for their assistance. He also gathered into his army the Scots, Picts, and Irish, and whomsoever else he knew bore hatred toward his uncle.

When Arthur returned to find the Saxons in the land, and all the great work that he had accomplished for his kingdom undone, he saw that his only hope lay in fighting. Gathering together his warriors he marched against his treacherous nephew. At the first onset there was great slaughter on both sides, and Modred was put to flight. For seven long years Arthur continued the struggle, until, at last, he drove his enemies into Cornwall, and torn by inward grief because Modred had so often escaped him, he pursued him to Camlam, where, at last, he overtook him.

He encouraged his men by reminding them that these motley barbarians from many kingdoms were raw recruits unused to war, and were quite unable to make a stand against

valiant men like themselves, seasoned in so many battles, if they fell upon them and fought like men. While the two leaders were exhorting their men, the battalions made a sudden rush at each other, and began the battle, striving to see which could deal their blows the more quickly.

“On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed;
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.”

When the day was far spent, Arthur, with a company of 6000 men, made a charge upon that portion of the enemy where he knew Modred to be, and hewing a path with their swords, cut clean through it, and inflicted terrible slaughter. Arthur was face to face with his hated nephew at last, and raising his sword he struck the traitor down with a mighty blow. The battle continued in all its fierceness until Arthur was carried out of the deadly strife mortally wounded. He was taken to Glastonbury, where he died, giving up the crown of Britain to his kinsman Constantine.

Arthur is still the hero of the Britons, and as long as the Welsh nation remains, the memory

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of all that is most chivalrous, most true, and most noble will ever cling around the name of the "blameless king,"

"Whose wondrous deeds shall be for ever sung,
Sweet music to the ear, sweet honey to the tongue,
The only prince that hears the just applause,
Greatest that e'er shall be, and best that ever was."

The Passing of Arthur

THEN quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged

Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great
brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an
arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.

So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker
breath :

“ Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.

Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or
seen ? ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

“ Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho’ I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look’d again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish’d him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.”

And answer made King Arthur, breathing
hard :

“ My end draws nigh ; ’tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.”

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro’ his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,

O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick,
quick!

I fear it is too late, and I shall die."

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he
walk'd,

Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry

Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves

And barren chasms, and all to left and right

The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he
based

His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang

Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—

And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,

And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were
ware

That all the decks were dense with stately
forms

Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by
these

Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from
them rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,

And, as it were one voice, an agony

Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills

All night in a waste land, where no one comes,

Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the
barge,"

And to the barge they came. There those three
Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King, and
wept.

But she, that rose the tallest of them all

And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,

And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his
hands,

And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,

And dropping bitter tears against his brow

Striped with dark blood: for all his face was
white

And colourless, and like the wither'd moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with
dust ;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his
lips.

So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere :
“ Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that
led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,

And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by
prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let
thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them
friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion ;

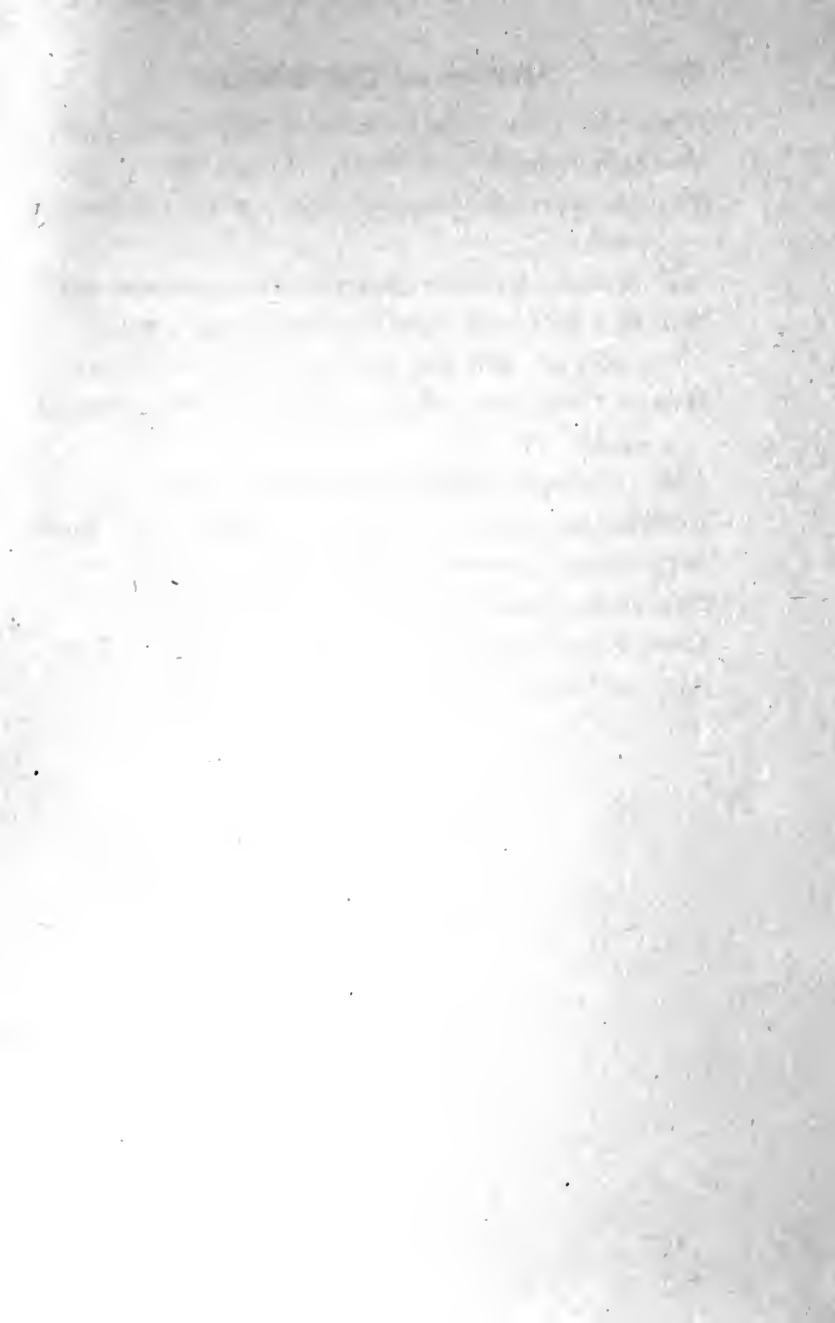
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-
lawns

And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted
swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

LORD TENNYSON.



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